



THE CENTENARY TEST

Melbourne Cricket Ground
March 1977



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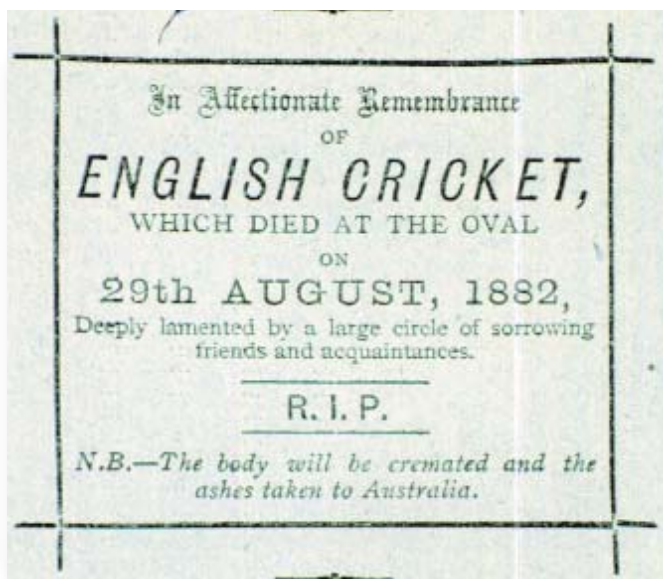
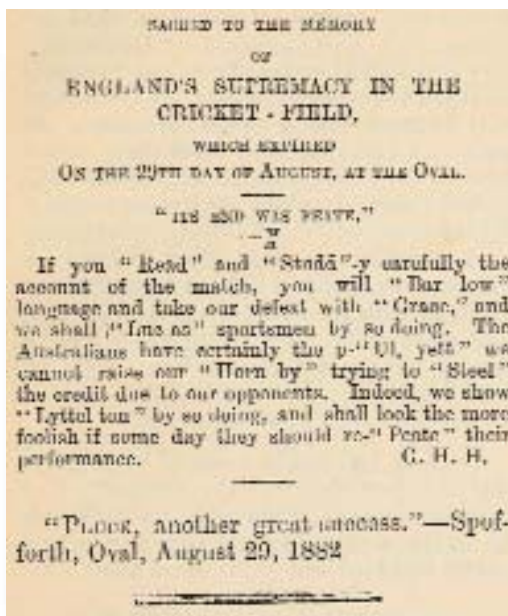
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The mock obituary notices that appeared after England's shock loss to Australia at The Oval in 1882.



THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN CRICKET

At the time of the inaugural contests between Australia and England in 1877 international cricket was very much in its infancy. Lillywhite's team of 1876-77 was only the fourth English side to visit Australia since the start of inter-colonial matches in the early 1850s, while in the same period only one Australian team had visited England: a team of aboriginal cricketers in 1868, captained by Charles Lawrence, who had been a member of the first England side to tour Australia in 1861-62.

Nineteenth century contests and the origin of the Ashes

The years immediately following Lillywhite's tour witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of overseas tours, with Australian teams visiting England at two-yearly intervals between 1878 and 1890, while no fewer than seven English teams came to Australia from 1878-79 to 1887-88.

While Lillywhite's team was still in Australia, plans were made to send an Australian team to England in 1878. The Australians arrived in England unheralded, with few expecting an unknown group of colonials to have much chance of success. This view was rapidly amended when, in the second match of the tour, against a strong MCC team at Lord's captained by W. G. Grace, the tourists won by nine wickets. The home side was bowled out for just 33 and 19, Fred Spofforth taking 6/4 and 4/16, well supported by Harry Boyle, who had the remarkable figures of 6/3 in the second innings. According to H. S. Altham in *A History of Cricket* 'the defeat of the MCC was a nine-days' wonder, and made the reputation of the Australians at a single stroke'.

Spofforth, a wonderful fast bowler with deadly variations in pace and movement, did more than any other player to establish the reputation of Australian cricket. When the Australians returned home and played a one-off Test against an English team captained by Lord Harris, he captured 13 wickets, including a hat trick. The first Test in England took place during Australia's next tour, in 1880, when a match was played at The Oval. W.G. Grace made 152 for England, and although Billy Murdoch, who had succeeded Dave Gregory as Australia's captain, made an unbeaten 153 in the second innings, England won by five wickets.

Another one-off Test was played on Australia's next tour in 1882. This match, also played at The Oval, is arguably the most famous Test of all time, Australian winning by seven runs, after England had been set only 85 runs to win. Spofforth was again the star. He had taken 7/46 in England's first innings and legend has it that prior to taking the field for England's second innings, he declared that 'this thing can be done'. He bowled magnificently, capturing 7/44, as England lost its last eight wickets for 26 runs. Australia's win stunned the English public and was summed up by the editor of *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game*.



A reporter was surprised to see Ian Johnson removing his coat to shift chairs, but the MCC secretary was not doing anything unusual – around the MCG, 'Johnno' had a reputation for always being ready and willing to lend a hand. The famous English broadcaster John Arlott was amazed at the 'variety of stalls for refreshments and every kind of souvenir', concluding that 'the pre-Test activity at the Melbourne Cricket Ground has been such as no Test match has ever known before'. The highest accolade came from Marylebone secretary Billy Griffith, who said 'This must be the most magnificent effort ever made by any cricketing authority ... I do not believe any other authority in the world would have had the courage to attempt it.' ¹⁰

Despite all the planning and preparation, there were many who shared the views of Australian captain Greg Chappell about the match:

For weeks before it started high powered publicity had billed it as 'a million dollar birthday party' though I must confess before I arrived in the Victorian capital I tended to think of it as basically just another duel with Tony Greig and his England team, and a valuable pipe-opener for the forthcoming England tour.

However, the arrival of about ten thousand visitors from overseas and interstate ensured that this would not be just another match. An official of the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau said that, with all accommodation within three miles of the Ground booked out, 'Melbourne has not had an influx of visitors like it since the Olympic Games were held here in 1956.' ¹¹

Once he arrived, Greg Chappell sensed that a special, difficult-to-describe atmosphere was brewing in Melbourne. Certainly the sense of anticipation about the coming match was growing, but some visitors linked that to the Ground itself. Colin Cowdrey, who had scored a great 102 there in 1954, felt that 'This ground generates more cricket atmosphere than anywhere in the world ...' The expatriate journalist Murray Hedgcock wrote:

This huge, buzzing, colourful ground holds cricketing magic for any lover of the game, and especially for Victorians. Sydney and Adelaide may claim their grounds are the epitome of Australian cricket ... but when you come from Victoria and your boyhood introduction to the game was in that grey echoing cavern of the outer stand looking out across to the pavilion and stands where Melbourne society and the cricketing heavyweights were based, then the MCG is the ground that spells cricket.

To such men, the Ground was not only synonymous with the game – the fact that it was the home of Test cricket gave it a unique status. ¹²



Special Visitor's Tickets to the Members' Reserve for Percy Fender and Jack Ryder, the oldest players from their respective countries to attend the Centenary Test.

The mystique came alive when the past players began arriving in Melbourne on Tuesday March 8. One pressman observed that many had 'gone grey or bald or both. Most of them carry more weight than in days gone by. Some of them have changed so much you don't quite know who they are ... But all of them have a story to tell, a memory to live.'¹³ Indeed they did. More than anything else, it was the stories and memories of these men, never before assembled in such force, that made it impossible for the Centenary Test and its celebrations to be mere routine. Nothing was closer to the heart of Anglo-Australian Test cricket than these stars of yesteryear and their experiences. Between them, they spanned the entire history of Test cricket – in their youth, some had encountered players from the very first Test. Sir Donald Bradman, for example, had met Charles Bannerman, whose 165 at Melbourne in 1877 was the first of all Test centuries.

Among the stories and memories were tales that had become part of cricket folklore. When the 84-year-old Percy Fender was reminded that in 1930 he had questioned Bradman's ability to succeed in English conditions, he ruefully commented 'An indiscretion of youth.' Bill Voce recalled the day Jardine sent him to a Brisbane hospital to collect Eddie Paynter:

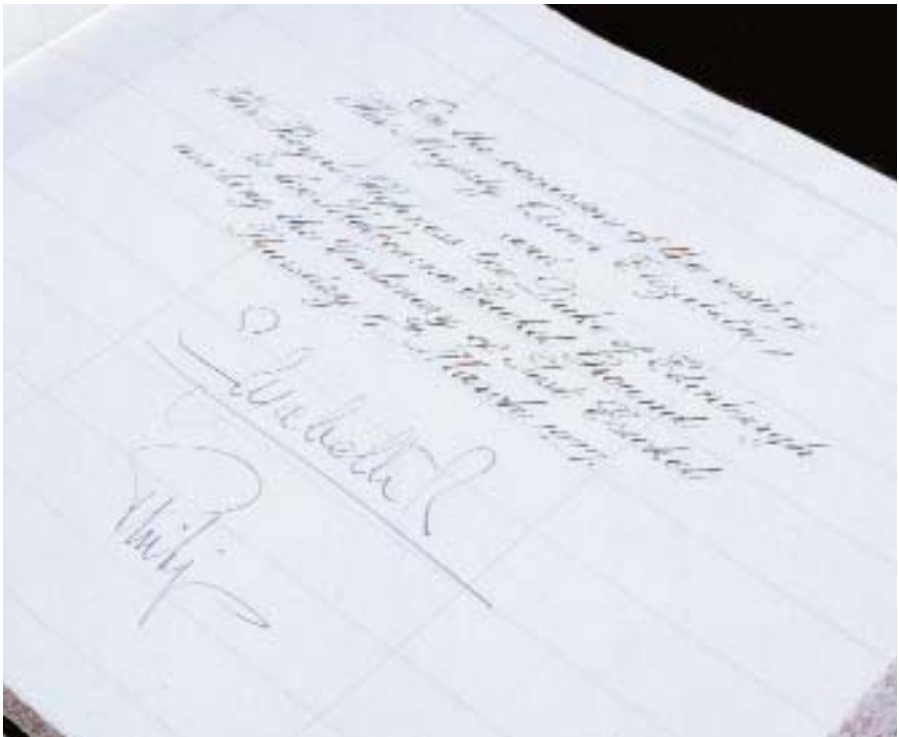
The nursing sister said 'There's no way he can leave.' I said 'That's where you are wrong, lass. If he's breathing, there's no way he can stay. The boss wants him.'



His epic innings over, the solitary figure of Derek Randall heads for the dressing



Amid a standing ovation, Randall disappears into the crowd after entering at the



The Melbourne Cricket Club Visitors Book, showing the signatures of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.



A philatelic cover, bearing the stamps issued to commemorate the Centenary Test and the Queen's Silver Jubilee, postmarked at the MCG's temporary post office on the final

AUSTRALIA v. ENGLAND

Centenary Test Match

Played at Melbourne Cricket Ground on March 12, 13, 14, 16 & 17, 1977.

Australia won by 45 runs. Toss: England.

Australia

I. C. Davis	lbw b Lever	5 - c Knott b Greig	68
R. B. McCosker	b Willis	4 - (10) c Greig b Old	25
G. J. Cosier	c Fletcher b Lever	10 - (4) c Knott b Lever	4
* C. S. Chappell	b Underwood	40 - (3) b Old	2
D. W. Hookes	c Greig b Old	17 - (6) c Fletcher b Underwood	56
K. D. Walters	c Greig b Willis	4 - (5) c Knott b Greig	66
† R. W. Marsh	c Knott b Old	28 - not out	110
G. J. Gilmour	c Greig b Old	4 - b Lever	16
K. J. O'Keefe	c Breasley b Underwood	0 - (2) c Willis b Old	14
D. K. Lillee	not out	10 - (8) c Amies b Old	25
M. H. N. Walker	b Underwood	2 - not out	8
Extras	b 4, lb 2, nb 8	14 - lb 10, nb 15	25
	1/11 2/10 3/20 4/45 5/51	138 1/30 2/40 3/53 (9 wkts, dec)	419
	6/102 7/114 8/117 9/126 10/138	4/132 5/187 6/244	
		7/277 8/383 9/407	

England

R. A. Woolmer	c Chappell b Lillee	9 - lbw b Walker	12
J. M. Breasley	c Hookes b Lillee	12 - lbw b Lillee	43
D. L. Underwood	c Chappell b Walker	7 - (10) b Lillee	7
D. W. Randall	c Marsh b Lillee	4 - (3) c Cosier b O'Keefe	174
D. I. Amies	c O'Keefe b Walker	4 - (4) b Chappell	64
K. W. R. Fletcher	c Marsh b Walker	4 - (5) c Marsh b Lillee	1
* A. W. Greig	b Walker	18 - (6) c Cosier b O'Keefe	41
† A. P. C. Knott	lbw b Lillee	15 - (7) lbw b Lillee	42
C. M. Old	c Marsh b Lillee	3 - (8) c Chappell b Lillee	2
J. K. Lever	c Marsh b Lillee	11 - (9) lbw b O'Keefe	4
R. C. D. Willis	not out	1 - not out	5
Extras	b 2, lb 2, w 1, nb 2	7 - b 8, lb 4, w 3, nb 7	22
	1/19 2/30 3/34 4/40 5/40	95 1/28 2/113 3/279 4/290 5/346	417
	6/61 7/65 8/78 9/86 10/95	6/369 7/380 8/385 9/410 10/417	

England Bowling

	O.	M.	R.	W.	O.	M.	R.	W.
Lever	12	1	36	2	21	1	95	2
Willis	8	0	33	2	22	0	91	0
Old	12	4	39	3	27.6	2	104	4
Underwood	11.6	2	16	3	(5) 12	2	38	1
Greig					(4) 14	3	66	2

Australia Bowling

Lillee	13.3	2	26	6	34.4	7	139	5
Walker	15	3	54	4	22	4	83	1
O'Keefe	1	0	4	0	(4) 33	6	108	3
Gilmour	5	3	4	0	(3) 4	0	29	0
Chappell					16	7	29	1
Walters					3	2	7	0

Close of play scores: 1st day - Eng (1) 1/29 (Breasley 12, Underwood 5); 2nd day - Aust (2) 3/104 (Davis 45, Walters 32); 3rd day - Aust (2) 8/387 (Marsh 95, McCosker 17); 4th day - Eng (2) 7/191 (Randall 87, Amies 34). 12th Men: R. J. Bright (Aust); G. D. Barlow (Eng). Eight-ball overs.

Umpires: T. F. Brooks and M. C. O'Connell.



Melbourne Cricket Club
www.mcc.org.au